1: Cohen E-4,5 (1956-1965) 1967 MS14 Kanuri MS14

[p. 3]

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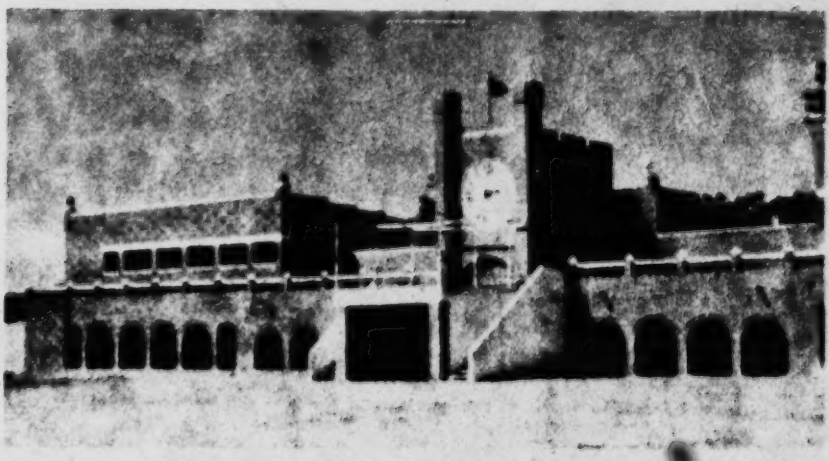
(Top) A district head in his reception room; behind him his clients are counting tax returns. The bags on the floor are shillings.

(Bottom) The palace of the Shehu of Bornu.



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175 642 643 ent time. It was during Shehu Omar's reign that Barth, the famous African explorer, visited Bornu and obtained the first written account of its history.

175 643 [669] The descendants of Shehu Laminu ruled throughout the rest of the nineteenth century without undue excitement. There were always succession problems indicated by struggles for the throne among possible heirs and during the 1850s there was even a revolt in which a prince of the realm overturned his older brother for a few months until the deposed monarch was able to gather his forces and recapture the government. But such events had always been the common currency of Bornu's history.

175 648 Later in the century, however, a tragedy befell the kingdom. A marauding brigand of the Sudan who had gathered around himself an army of well-disciplined and trained soldiers slashed his way westward across Africa conquering and pillaging as he went. In 1893 he crossed over into Bornu and demolished the capital, defeating the Bornu army and sending the Shehu with some of his followers fleeing to the north and west of Bornu. This man, Rabeh, is still remembered today in Bornu for the tyrannical hold he attempted to establish and for the plundering and sacking of many Bornu villages which he carried out while subduing the state. Eventually he built himself a capital in southeast Bornu and married his daughter to the son of the Emir of Sokoto. Rabeh provides some interesting grounds for speculation. For had colonial expansion into the area not conflicted with Rabeh's own plans, he might very likely have founded Bornu's third dynasty. As it was Britain, France, and Germany were carving up West Africa for themselves.

The French arrived first and soon found themselves at war with Rabeh. Eventually he was defeated and killed, and although his sons attempted to keep control of their father's new found kingdom, it was a futile gesture in the face of French arms. By 1902 the British had taken over what is now Bornu province in northeastern Nigeria; the Germans obtained the Cameroons—containing Rabeh's old capital, and the French set up their headquarters at Fort Lamy in what is now Chad. The old Kanembu Shehu was put on the throne again by the French at Dikwa (Rabeh's capital) and was then maintained by the Germans. In the scramble over [631] territory that characterized this period, the British persuaded the Shehu to return to Nigerian territory, where they have been ever since as rulers of Bornu.

The British first brought the Shehu to Kuka, the nineteenth-century capital of the Kanembu Shehus, which they had promised to rebuild for him as part of the bargain for his return. They set up their own headquarters in the village of Magumeri and tried to administer the state from these two centers. The job of administration from Magumeri proved impossible, as did the prospect of rebuilding Kuka; it had been sacked and demolished during the Rabeh period. In 1905 the colonial government decided to set up a new capital at Maiduguri in southern Bornu which would serve as a center for both the emirate and the Province of Bornu. Today it still serves both these functions and is the major urban center of the area.

The British also reorganized the political structure of the state, and geared it into the wider colonial government they were evolving for Northern Nigeria as a whole under the leadership of Lord Lugard. Under Lugard's direction they also [439] stopped the trans-Saharan trade, especially in slaves, and oriented Bornu's economy southwards towards the Guinea Coast and the rest of Nigeria. In 1914 they quietly, and with practically no incident, took over the Northern Cameroons from the Ger-

1: Cohen E-4,5 (1956-1965) 1967 MS14 Kanuri MS14

daughters of sovereigns were the princes and princesses of the realm. Princesses were often given in marriage by the king to create alliances between the throne and other states, or nobles, or as rewards to trusted followers. Often, one among the princes was designated Chiroma or heir apparent. However, there was no hard and fast rule that the Chiroma either had the title for life, or that having been graced by the title its holder automatically succeeded to the throne. Although there was no special term for royal granddaughter, a king's grandsons who might become princes, if their fathers obtained the throne, were referred to by a special term.

Attached to the royal household by bonds of strict loyalty and obedience were the king's followers, some of whom lived in the palace, while others lived nearby. These, known as Koguna, together with members of the royal family and their followers provided the basis for the nobility of the state. They were of two main types—slave and free—with slaves being divided into ordinary slaves and eunuchs. The slaves originated from the slave trade or from raids made among pagan groups, or from the sons and daughters of slaves. The free nobility came from deroyalized segments of the royal family as it expanded through time and from descendants of nobles. This nobility was the source of personnel for the bulk of the administrative activities of the state. They served as the monarch's personal bodyguard, as messengers, military commanders, tax collectors, trusted spies, praise singers, slave raiders, consuls, and foreign emissaries. From their ranks came the people who bore the major titles of the state. Some of the titles were derived from Islam; others came from earlier times in Kanem or Bornu history. Although much changed in their nature, a number of these have survived to the present day.

In order to administer the kingdom, titled nobles, including the titled women of the royal family, were given fiefs equivalent to what are today village area units. All such holdings were fragmented and dispersed so that no one noble had control over any large portion of the state. The fief holdings varied in size and number per noble and were a measure of the political success of that particular noble at any point in time. The one exception was the Galidima. The holder of this title maintained a large consolidated set of village areas on the western boundary to protect the east-west trade and guard the western approaches to the capital city. The fief-holders raised militia for the monarch and taxes for themselves and the monarch. They also served as an appeal court system for the local people when they wished adjudication at higher than the local level. Thus people could obtain a royal audience by going through the fief hierarchy. The Kanuri also used the widespread Sudanese practice of dividing the kingdom into quadrants based on the four cardinal directions. Over each quadrant was a highly trusted follower of the king who could oversee the administration of his own quadrant, raise direct royal tax levies, and serve as an alternative form of hierarchy between the people and their ruler. The system functioned in this way as a check on the power of fief-holders, since the king could take fiefs away and redistribute them if there was sufficient reason for doing so. Through their own subordinates these quadrant leaders also administered the nomadic peoples of the kingdom who could not be easily worked into the administration of the fief system based as it was on settled populations. Two of the four leaders were always eunuchs, making for an automatically free power of appointment by the monarch, since these men had no heirs. The other two were always chosen from among the king's closest associates, although there was also a

1: Cohen E-4,5 (1956-1965) 1967 MS14 Kanuri MS14

tendency for these two titles to be passed on down the male line. Even in this latter case, however, the king could always choose those most likely to be totally loyal to his administration from among the heirs, or even disregard the hereditary rule if he wished and give the title to some other person. The four quadrant leaders also had their own fiefs which they used as the basic support for their large household organizations in the capital.

Vassal groups and territories paid tribute in kind through their leaders to the treasury of the Mai of Bornu. In the heyday of Bornu during the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries these vassals included a large number of surrounding peoples in what is now Northern Nigeria, Niger, and Chad. These subordinate groups were organized in two ways. In the first instance a Bornu consul was appointed to reside in the tributary state to help collect annual tributes and administer the government. This was in effect a kind of conquest and occupation used most often in adjacent and nearby territories. The second method was to leave the territory under the control of its own leaders after they had pledged their loyalty and their intention to pay tributes and give military support to Bornu whenever necessary; they were also expected to provide safety and hospitality to expeditions and caravans going to and from Bornu. Some of these vassal states were caught between two great powers. Such a case were the Hausa of northwestern Nigeria. Caught as they were between Songhai to the west and Bornu to the east they, therefore, paid tributes in two directions, always hoping that someday they could be relieved of these burdens by an increase in their own power or a decrease in the power of one or both of their overlords. Indeed Bornu traditions and written records are almost totally concerned with expeditions against reluctant tributaries who were remiss in the payment of their tributes. On the other hand, there are also accounts of tributary states sending to Bornu for help against external enemies and internal revolts; so the relationship could, and often did, work to the advantage of both the conqueror and the conquered.

The religious and legal life of the state was strongly influenced by the specialized religious practitioners who were steeped in the Koran and Islamic jurisprudence. The chief judge and religious leader of early Bornu was given the title of Talba and is referred to in traditions as "second to the king," or the next in authority to the monarch himself. He and his descendants and client followers knew the Arabic script and thus made up a literate group closely associated with political leaders as scribes, legal advisers and religious functionaries. These men sat in on judicial hearings and advised political leaders who adjudicated on the basis of their own knowledge of the law. Besides the Mai, most noble households kept such religious men within their compounds for similar purposes, and as instructors for the children. Under such conditions the religious leaders were also strong supporters of the state and its power structure.

Little is known of the details of taxation for the early Bornu kingdom although records are much better for the nineteenth century system. Obviously some form of tax was levied on local fiefs by fief-holders as well as by the monarch who also received tributes from vassal states and a major portion of booty from warfare. As we have already noted, it is fairly evident that royal taxation of the Bornu population itself was carried on through the efforts of the monarch's titled followers who held powers of royal taxation privilege in the four quadrants of the state.

1: Cohen E-4,5 (1956-1965) 1967 MS14 Kanuri MS14

came a very powerful group of chiefs through whom the kingdom was administered. When these men went to their districts, sometimes they had precolonial ties in these areas as big lords—some of the constituent towns in the district were their former fiefs; sometimes however they were complete strangers to the area. Besides this there was a constant shuffling of different district heads through transfers, dismissals, retirements, and deaths. The various village area heads under each district head were chosen on the basis of investigations conducted by the British colonial officials to find out who among the population had the hereditary right to leadership for a particular local settlement and its satellite communities. Very often there was no tie of previous loyalty between the village area head and the new district head. Previously the problem had been solved by sending out a chima gana or junior lord who represented the fief-holder. He had lived in the fief and created a set of loyal local followers. At first district heads did the same things. They sent out their own representatives—now called chima—to run the village areas in their district for them. This practice was soon discovered by the British and as early as 1910 was declared illegal, although it continued on until well into the 1930s, and there are even some district heads today who admit they use chima to ensure control of their district. In Chapter 6 we will take up this problem again and examine it in more detail within the organization of the district.

The central government of the emirate has undergone a number of significant changes under colonialism. At first the Shehu collected taxes on settled peoples through the district heads and taxes on nomads through two trusted slave nobles. This proved unsatisfactory to the British who very early in the century changed the system so that each district head was responsible for tax collection on both settled and on nomad populations in his district. This weakened the power of the Shehu but at the same time (*ca.* 1914) the British began enforcing among themselves the idea that they must deal with the Bornu government through the Shehu and his Council. Thus good or bad reports of the district heads or village area heads had to be officially put through the Shehu giving him a great deal of either protective or punitive power over his district and village chiefs.

After 1914 there was an increasing effort to create a working Council for the Shehu with a modern treasury from which local planning could be financed. Starting with only a few members it has grown slowly through the years to function as a cabinet with a Waziri or chief minister at its helm. Each councilor has a portfolio or Native Authority department, such as Education, Works, Agriculture, and so on, and these have central offices in the capital with representatives spread out in district capitals throughout Bornu. The experience in this twentieth-century emirate has produced Kanuri who now take part in regional and national politics so that men from Bornu sit in Kaduna, Lagos, London, and even at the United Nations in New York.

The movement of fief-holders out into the bush to administer districts produced a district capital where the ajia or district head resides. To this capital he brought his urban followers; and to the village as well came the district judge and his retinue. As the Native Authority departments developed, local representatives of the various civil service departments of the emirate government came out to the district capital as well. This makes the district capital a more complex and urbanized center and has forced the effects of such urbanization to spread widely

1: Cohen E-4,5 (1956-1965) 1967 MS14 Kanuri MS14

On the other hand the local official must work through the district head if he wishes to carry out his job successfully. Children are ordered into the district school through the district head's office. Forestry reserves are set up by his directive; cattle are rounded up by him. Indeed almost any action involving a response by the people in the district must come originally from the district head. A lawan, if approached for cooperation by civil service employees, would generally refuse to cooperate if he had not been first notified by the district head's office. The district head is a high official of the state while the native authority employee is generally the lowest status field representative of his department. Thus they pay the district head respect, stand up when he approaches them, take off their shoes before entering his compound, and consult him on programs they wish to have carried out in his district.

On his part the district head quickly establishes who the native authority officials are, and what families they come from or are connected to in the emirate. If the district head is closely connected by friendship and political alliance to a high-placed official in the local representative's department, then he may have an avenue of control over this local person through the latter's own superior. On the other hand the native authority employee may be connected with the powerful people in the emirate and the district head then knows that this particular official could possibly bring powerful forces into action if a situation warranted it.

The relationships of the district head to the capital are highly complex and result from the fact that he is the official link between the central government of the emirate and the local political organization of the district. Officially he is responsible to only one body, the central agency of the emirate government which is the Shehu-in-Council. This council, called the Bornu Native Authority Council, under the chairmanship of the Waziri or chief minister, is the highest authority in the emirate. As we noted in Chapter 2, the council acts like a cabinet and each member has a Native Authority department under his direction. District heads receive instructions about policy from the council and directives about programs from each of the departments. The district head delivers taxes to the Native Authority Treasury and must account for his actions to the council which has a major voice in appointing, dismissing, retiring, and transferring district heads from high to low-paying districts or vice versa.

Both during the colonial period and at the present, the Bornu Provincial Government has had several emirates under its jurisdiction, of which Bornu is the largest. Although not officially responsible to the Provincial Government, the district head and his work have always been inspected periodically by touring officers of the Provincial Government. These men can make recommendations which influence the emirate government and during colonial times there are a number of records of district heads being retired or dismissed because of the "advice" of Provincial Government officials. Thus the district head has to be sure his actions are in line with the demands and standards of provincial officials who are today generally from other parts of Northern Nigeria, and were, up to a few years ago, the British colonial officers.

The district head has other links with the capital as well. As we have already noted, he keeps a household in the palace ward of the capital city, and his followers in his compound under a wakil, or chief follower, visit the palace regu-

1: Cohen E-4,5 (1956-1965) 1967 MS14 Kanuri MS14

643 bodied in his title, "commander of the faithful," and is expressed ritually in a number of ways. Thus at the feast celebrating the end of Ramadan (the annual Muslim fast), a special ram of the Shehu is killed by the chief religious leader of the state. No one considering himself a citizen of the emirate and a subject of the Shehu is supposed to kill his own ram for the feast day until the royal ceremony is completed.

643 644 At all annual festivals and state occasions, and every Friday to a lesser extent, the Shehu is attended at his palace by his court and representatives of the people. The court includes members of the royal family, title holders, the Native Authority council members, and any district heads who may be in the capital or their city representatives who sit outside the royal courtroom. Into the royal presence come representatives of each Native Authority department, representatives of the religious leaders of the community, a sample of school children, leaders and representatives of the various occupational groupings under their own headmen. Each group gives symbolic pledges of loyalty and obedience to the throne by saying prayers for the health and welfare of the monarch and the state. The people, including the nobles, go down on their knees to the monarch, stand when he stands, remove their shoes in his presence, and speak to him only indirectly using terms of reverence and respect.

64 It is difficult to assess what real power the Shehu has in the emirate government. The present incumbent is a very old man, and for the last decade or so the bulk of administrative affairs have been handled by the Native Authority Council under the direction of the Waziri. Whether this now indicates a trend toward constitutional monarchy or whether a new, younger and more vigorous Shehu would reassert the power of the throne is a question that is fascinating but at present not capable of being answered. Certainly the Native Authority Council and the various departments under the council are new and growing powers in the contemporary society, but the district heads are formally responsible to the Shehu. Since the district heads are still very powerful members of the political system, a new Shehu could conceivably affect policy and the administration of the emirate very considerably through his influence on these men and their appointments. It is also very possible that he would influence the Native Authority Council itself and appointments to that body. Potentially the office is a very powerful one, and it seems unlikely that its power will diminish in future since the instruments of power are available to anyone occupying the throne who wishes to use them.

647 [631] [648] The main business of government of the emirate is handled on a day-to-day basis in the Native Authority departments, which are coordinated with similar departments in other emirates of the province under the Bornu Provincial Government which in its turn looks to the Regional Government of Northern Nigeria for policy directives that are regional in scope.

647 463 229 [365] [177] The personnel of the Native Authority departments form what has come to be called a new class in the society. They are salaried bureaucrats who work in offices and generally have some form of western education. They wear wrist watches, read English and vernacular newspapers, listen to the radio for both local, national, and international news, go to political meetings, join civil service associations, and think of themselves as urban even when they are stationed in the rural

648 greatly since that time, as Nigeria is an independent nation today.

The policy of the British in Northern Nigeria had been one of indirect rule. In this manner, a small administrative staff was able to govern a huge area, and the chiefs and Emirs of the North remained the political rulers in their own areas.

631 642 Bornu Province is divided administratively into five Emirates, though the Emirate of Bornu overshadows the remaining four in geographic area, population, and political importance. The Emirates of Bornu and of Bama are Kanuri. The Emirs of Fika, Biu and Gashua rule over three small tribes, discussed in the preceding section, which are within the sphere of Kanuri influ-

634 ence. In addition to the Emirates, the provinces of the North are divided into districts, and each district has an appointed native District Head. The large Emirates are made up of many districts; the small Emirates sometimes have no more than a single district. Bornu Emirate has twenty-one districts.

648 Although the British ruled through the existing political system in Bornu Emirate, they controlled all important policy decisions and they had brought about important changes in the political organization of the Kanuri in order to carry out their policies. The actual relationship between the British Resident, who was in charge of the province, assisted by his staff of District Officers, and the Shehu, his Waziri and the Shehu's Council, differed radically from that officially stated. Although the British administration claimed to be merely advisory, it was

648 the actual administrative power. The twenty-one District Heads
648 in Bornu Emirate were appointed by the Shehu, as was the Waziri,
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634 and the members of the Shehu's council. Although these appoint-
ments formally need not be approved by the British administra-
tion, in practice their approval was necessary.

634 The system of District Heads replaced the feudal absentee
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• 631 landlords who controlled Bornu in the latter half of the nine-
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[651] teenth century. Many peasants still refer to their District
Head as chima, the name for the feudal lord of former times,
since one of the main functions of the District Head is the
[329] collection of taxes. Although many commoners continue to view
the system today much as their ancestors looked upon the polit-
ical system during the days of the Bornu Empire, radical changes
[642] had been brought about. Under the empire actions and decisions
of the feudal lords were subject only to the disapproval of the
[648] Shehu, the absolute ruler. Today a still larger political unit,
the government of Nigeria, maintains a legal system which pro-
tects all citizens though they may not be aware of it. A Kanuri
could appeal out of his own political system, and seek the pro-
tection of a British District Officer against the ruling of his
own Village Head or District Head. Obviously such a move might
have serious repercussions and not many individuals decided to
take the step. Nevertheless, the alternative existed.

692 In accordance with the British practice of ruling through
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native institutions where possible, the formal legal system of
Northern Nigeria continued to be Islamic law, more precisely

El Kanemi brought
175 with him a group of Kanembu and Shuwa nobles, who formed the
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565 nucleus, along with their men, of the army which drove back
177 the Fulani invaders of Bornu. These noble Kanembu families remained in Bornu and adopted Kanuri culture. El Kanemi built the new capital of Bornu at Kukawa, and his son Shehu Omar
175 ruled from Kukawa. The empire of Bornu had declined greatly
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565 from its zenith in the late sixteenth and early seventeenth centuries, and the Fulani attacks were both a sign of its weakness and an additional factor in furthering the decline. In form, however, the empire remained much the same. Many of the old families who had been aristocrats under the Mais retained
175 their titles, their lands and their position. The new noble
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565 Kanembu and Shuwa families that had followed el Kanemi were given Kanuri titles and entered the social system as Kanuri aristocracy. In time, they accepted Kanuri culture, according to accepted procedures of assimilation which are well understood by the Kanuri and apply to conquerors and conquered alike, to slaves and to freemen.

175 The Shehu and his court ruled in Kukawa. Members of the
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565 royal family were given large tracts of land, including many
631 villages, and from their lands they took money for taxes paid
423 to the central government and for their own uses. In like fash-
[651] ion, the nobility, who were the commanders of army regiments and holders of high titles, had their lands and villages. These were the chimas. Even religious leaders, such as the Imam, were
175 given land. The nobles who were chimas, continued to live in
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631

175 Kukawa while their slaves and subordinates administered their
565 lands and collected taxes. Slaves of the Shehu could them-
631 selves be chimas, and in fact some of the highest titles--
[567] those of Kaigama (a general of the army), and Mastrema (a
[554] eunuch) were reserved for slaves of the Shehu.

175 The "knights" of the Shehu were titled lords, who served
631 as his kabuna. Each lord also had his own kabuna, who vowed
565 allegiance directly to him. The kabuna of the lord actually
567 administered his lands while he lived in the capital. Many of
them were his slaves, but just as slaves of the Shehu could
themselves be powerful nobles, so too slaves of a lord who
were his kabuna were powerful individuals in the villages under
[632] the jurisdiction of their lord. From his kabuna the lord se-
[627] lected the most trustworthy and rewarded them by having them
appointed town heads (Lowan), or to a lesser extent village
heads (Bulama). The Lowan of a town was directly involved in
administering his town, in adjudicating disputes through arbi-
tration and in collecting the property tax (haraji).

634 It was said that the chima was almost the absolute author-
173 ity in his lands. If he saw a horse that he wished to have or
642 a woman whom he admired, he could have them simply by indicat-
ing that he wanted to possess them. No man would refuse him
[643] directly. However, if reports came to the Shehu that a chima
was acting irresponsibly the Shehu could reprimand the man,
175 and could even remove his title from him. Any man could ap-
643 peal directly to the Shehu for justice. The power of the Shehu
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554 565 644 Mogorom - younger sister of the Shehu. A conferred title which can be given to anyone. If the Shehu does not like his younger sister, he can give the title to whomever he wishes.

Dogoma - also the younger sister of the Shehu, but a lesser title than that of Mogorom.

Gumsu - usually head wife of the Shehu, but the title can instead be given, at the Shehu's pleasure, to another wife.

Kərjiroma - head of the Shehu's chirs.

175 423 601 565 554 644 Next let us turn to consider the Chimas, who had been mentioned earlier. Since all land was the Shehu's land, he had the power to give or withdraw the fiefs which were granted to chimas. By custom, certain lands were reserved for the Imam. In addition, the Maira, Gumsu, and Mogorom also had their own fiefs. The remaining lands were largely in the hands of the Shehu's kabuna, his knights and the commanders of his troops.

175 565 554 567 The Shehu's kabuna were divided into those who were free (kambe) and those who were slave (kalya). A number of titles which the Shehu granted were reserved for slaves. Among the slave titles, some were titles of kabuna, and others were not. Both of these, kabuna slaves and non-kabuna slaves, could be chimas. The four most important chimas held the following titles: Kaigama (a slave, and the head of all slave kabuna), Mastrema (a slave, but not a kabuna), Yuroma (a slave, but not a kabuna), Yerima (a freeman and a kabuna).

175 554 565 The most important Kanuri titles, all those mentioned above,

175 554 565 are individual titles which can be held by only one man at a time. There can be only one Kaigama, one Mastrema, and one Yerima at any given time. A man's son did not invariably inherit his father's title at his father's death. The title was conferred by the Shehu, customarily to the son of the previous title holder. If there were several sons, the one whom the Shehu judged most worthy was given the title; and if a title-holder had no sons, or no sons worthy of holding a title, the title might be given to anyone, though it was almost always given to someone of the household of the title-holder. There are several interesting cases of high titles given to talaka who were members of a household (the present holder of the title Talba is a slave who was given the title because there were no sons of the previous Talba; a horse boy inherited the title of Kaigama in the past; the Malam to the family, and a member of the household, inherited the title of Yirima). A talaka who was considered worthy, and was a member of a household whose head held a title might inherit that title; a common talaka without appropriate household affiliations could never hope to receive a title in former times.

The title was the mark of nobility in Kanuri society, and the embodiment of the several dimensions which, when taken together determined social importance. The title was linked to [631] the system of feudal chimas who paid allegiance to the Shehu [647] and effectively governed the land. The chimas had power, subject only to review by the Shehu himself, over the people in

his allegiance to the Ajia who might otherwise be tempted to replace him with one of his own men.

The kabuna represent a special category in the administration of the district. The colonial administration makes no provision for the kabuna; they are not NA appointees as are all the other officeholders mentioned above; they receive no salary. Yet, the services which they perform are vital if the district bureaucracy is to continue to function smoothly. The kabuna represent a traditional Kanuri social category whose roles are primarily in the political sphere. The roles of the kabuna have been slightly modified and adapted to the modern situation, but the relationship between kabuna and Ajia and between kabuna and populace is a traditional one and is once again typical of the persistence of the old social stratification system into the present.

Yerima Mustapha has fifty-nine kabuna at Geidam. Some are slaves; some are free. Many have been with Yerima for years and years. Head of all the kabuna is Wakil Ali, a slave. The kabuna are each given a house to live in, a horse belonging to Yerima, a plot of land to farm, and ceremonial trappings for themselves and for their horses. In turn, they swear allegiance to Yerima and work for him.

2. A history of important office-holders in Geidam.

The present town of Geidam is on the site of an old town called Dəmjeri. Five miles to the west of the present Geidam

3: Cohen E-4.5 (1956-1957) 1960 MS14 Kanuri MS14 ●
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Chapter I

The Setting

[1-1]

101 For at least a millenium the drama of empire has been played out in an immense area of Africa known as the western Sudan which lies at the southern fringe of the Sahara and stretches in a roughly east-west direction across the continent from the Atlantic to Lake Chad. [178] Bornu is one of the oldest of these and has maintained itself as an [631] ongoing political unit from early times into the modern world. Today the empire is a Muslim Emirate included as a sub-division of Bornu 162 Province in the Chad basin of northeastern Nigeria. The Emirate has [131] an area of approximately 24,000 square miles and a population of [161] 1,005,000 (1952 census) of which 626,000 are Kanuri, and 156,000 are Fulani and Shuwa nomads.(1) The remaining 224,000 people include an unspecified number of small pagan groups in the south of the Emirate together with other Nigerians mostly from the Hausa, Ibo and Yoruba tribes. There are as well 5,000 non-Nigerians including Levantines, Europeans and Africans from other countries.

132 The Emirate lies within latitudes 11 to 13 N. and longitudes [131] 11 to 13½ S. and has a typical sub-Saharan savannah climate. There is a mean daily maximum temperature of 94° F. from March to June and a mean daily minimum of 66° F. from July to February. The rainfall varies from north to south, being somewhat heavier in the south. Mean rainfall figures in inches per month at Maiduguri for the last thirty-six years are as follows:

J	F	M	A	M	J	J	A	S	O	N	D
.01	-	.01	.25	1.59	2.56	6.81	8.80	4.23	.75	.01	-

(1) The Province as a whole has a population of 1,596,000 of which 753,000 are Kanuri. Thus over 80% of the present Kanuri population of the Province live within the boundaries of the Emirate.

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311 is also supported by estimates made by officials of the Bornu agricultural department whose records indicate that only seven per cent of the total Emirate land area is under cultivation while another eight to nine per cent is resting land. Since the agricultural potential of the area is relatively homogeneous this means that there is no land pressure and no problem of over-population.

631 Bornu Emirate is a political unit, among others, within Bornu Province and the latter is in turn one of the provinces making up the Northern Region, the largest of the three regions, of Nigeria. The Emirate is under the nominal rule of the Shehu of Bornu and his council, with this latter body under the executive direction of the Wasiri of Bornu. These leaders all reside at the Emirate capital, Maiduguri, which is also the capital of Bornu Province. The entire area of the Emirate is divided into twenty-one districts each under a District Head who resides in the district capital. In its turn, each district is sub-divided into village areas under the headship of a Lawan (village area head). Finally under the Lawan are the wards of his village and the hamlets surrounding his village within the village area boundaries. These wards and hamlets are headed by men called Bulama.

648 The colonial government cuts across this semi-traditional structure. Its center is at Kaduna, the capital of the Northern Region of Nigeria, and its representatives reside throughout the region, with their headquarters at each provincial capital. The Resident Officer of Bornu Province is the senior colonial official in the province and is responsible to Kaduna for the administration of several Emirates and divisions of the province of which Bornu Emirate is only one, albeit the largest. Government departments of education, forestry, agriculture, and the like are responsible for their programs throughout the entire province and work through local native authority departments in each Emirate.

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642 kingdom. It is probable that the early state was organized as a group of clans, with one clan and a lineage within it as the ruling group. There is the possibility that this dominant group was an intrusive one, but this point has been so over-stressed with no substantiating data by other writers, that it would be wiser to leave it until sufficient archeological research has been done.

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829 After the move to Bornu and the founding of the capital of Birni Gazargamo we have some contemporary data with which to assess the life of the times. Ibn Fartua expresses the feelings of a chief servant of the Mai concerning the ethical nature of the state in the 16th century. He says that " . . .every people relies on imitation of its leaders. The leader goes before and the people follow him. He leads them to the Garden as it were by a bridle, after giving the Book of Direction, glad tidings about the Faith, right direction, and sure guidance in the path of law. So every man knows his rights and his obligations to others. Most excellent is the fame of just deeds, and justice on the part of a Mai for one day is equal to service of God for sixty years . . . A place where there is an evil Mai is better than a place which has none." (1) Thus the structural position of the Mai is extolled as being even more important than its functions, for when a leader is present every man knows his relationship to other men, and the people are enjoined to feel blessed at the fact of political leadership per se.

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• 631 The political organization of Bornu during the second florescence of the kingdom was structured outwards from the capital at Birni Gazaragamo with the cardinal directions of the State under the military protection of four titled noblemen. The south was under the Yurema or chief eunuch; the north was held by the Mustrema (also a eunuch); the east by the Kaigama (a

(1) Ahmed ibn Fartua, op. cit. pp.10-11.

175 631 nobleman); and the west by the Yerima (a nobleman). As far as can be ascertained these men were not enfieffed of these portions of the kingdom (they held fiefs elsewhere), but were rather hereditary titles connected with military functions in one of the quarters of the state, or in the army as a whole. Thus the Mustrema was responsible for controlling raids upon the northern area of the realm, and was in charge of northern troops when the army of the kindgom was assembled for war. In contrast, Nguru, in the northwest, was held by the Galidima who still holds it today. The latter, unlike the other "subregents", but like the tributary vassals, resided in his territory as a kind of semi-independent king although he was also one of the paramount courtiers of the Bornu ruler. All other nobles lived at the capital under the watchful eye of their king, and toured their districts 175 631 634 only when trouble was brewing or taxes were needed. Working within the above system was the organization of the state into fiefdoms held by the nobility, rewarded servants of the king, and military personnel. Any person to whom a fief was given or who received it through inheritance from an original recipient (which was more often the case) was called the Chima Kura. As was pointed out, all nobles with the exception of the Galidima lived at the capital, and the administration of the fief was carried on by a Chima Gana (small Chima) who was most often a slave or trusted servant of the Chima Kura. The Chima Gana usually resided in the fief itself raising taxes and maintaining law and order. With this system it was easy to gear in vassal states or nomad peoples. Their leaders were simply made Chima Kura of the Kanuri state, which strengthened the leader's position in his own group after conquest, and manoeuvred him into the Kanuri political organization.(1) Local traditions are fairly unanimous in attributing contin-

(1) This office because of its different nature was also referred to as the Kura Jilibe (head of the tribe or clan). The Kura Jilibe was however acting as the Chima Kura of his group, in relation to the Bornu throne.

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Local traditions are fairly unanimous in attributing continuity to this system of fiefdoms when the dynastic power changed hands at the beginning of the 19th century. Gradually the state began to be organized as it was of old, before the Fulani attacks, although now the fiefs were distributed amongst the family, courtiers, slaves and eunuchs of the Shehu.

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An early British report in Bornu indicates some of the dynamic qualities of the fief system as it operated in pre-British Bornu.(1) Tomlinson found that from 1893 to 1900 Rabeh had reduced the number of fiefs and for the most part placed them under his major lieutenants.(2) Being a stranger in a new land Rabeh had to keep his control as tight as possible and rely on a few trusted followers. Therefore the number of fiefs were reduced. Alternatively, when the Shehu was re-instated by the British and asked to help create "Districts" out of the old fiefs, he attempted to make as many of them as he could in order to obtain as large a body of followers as possible to consolidate his power.

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Although there is no mention made in any of the sources on Bornu, Kanuri informants claimed that the Chima Kura had the right to sell a fief if he so desired. Titled women were also given fiefs which were, as in the case of a male fiefholder, managed for them by slaves or servants in residence at the fief.

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The pre-British taxation system is remembered as consisting of two separate levies. One, the bintmram collected in binim (winter) was the property and organizational responsibility of the Chima Kura who owned the fief. Taxes were collected in kind at the local peasant level. The

(1) Tomlinson, F.J.P. Report of Nganzai District; 1918, in Prov. Office Maiduguri, Bornu, Prov. Nigeria.

(2) In a few cases, when the old Kanuri fiefholders declared allegiance to Rabeh, they were allowed to retain their fiefs. This occurred in the case of the fief of Magumeri in the 1890's.

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651 Chima Kura sent out a messenger from the capital to his representative in the fief, the Chima Gana, instructing him of the total demand of the levy. The messenger and the Chima Gana then raised the tax levy in the fief and extracted a surplus for their pains.

Part of this tax was given to the Shehu by the Chima Kura as sada'a (tithe). However, we are told that another tax was levied (also called the sada'a) which was specifically a royal revenue. Opinion differs as to the organization of the levy. Some sources tell of the king selling collection rights to trusted courtiers, while others refer to this tax as a special harvest tithe collected by the fief-holder and his representatives, partly for himself and partly for the king.

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[651] Within his holdings a fief-holder might use some of the area for his own purposes. For example, he might settle some of his slaves in a village and a large portion of the produce would come to him as his [792] rightful property. Or again, the fief-holder might give a segment of his holding to a mallam or a group of mallams (religious teachers and practioners) so that they might have land to farm and support themselves. [103] Very often such a settlement would be mahram, i.e. tax exempt. These areas [621] can still be noted in Bornu today in the names of villages. A village called Karliyari, or slave town is the present site of one of the old slave settlements in a fief, while the name Mallamari for a town refers to its past history as a town of mallams or holy men.

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651 In the case of the vassal states which were subdued in war, a portion of the tithes collected by the local chief would always be sent off as tribute to the ruler of Bornu. To insure that this practice was carried out, the Bornu monarch often placed a servant or a slave (never a relative) in the capital of the vassal state. When Richardson reached Zinder in the 1850's, he found an Arab of Tripoli who had travelled widely

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651 in the Mediterranean, ensconced in Zinder (a tributary of Bornu) as the representative of the Bornu monarch. A slave raid carried on into Bornu territory by the monarch of this petty state, for the purpose of allowing him to pay some of his personal debts, was condoned by the Bornu "consul" because a portion of the spoils from the raid was to be sent to the Shehu. Richardson also expressed the opinion that much of the real power in Zinder was in the hands of the Shehu's Representative rather than with the local authorities.(1)

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651 From the earliest records extant of the Kanuri empire in Kanem right up until the arrival of the British, a system of tax exemption obtained called the Mahram. Although it most often applied to religious mallams, who were recognized in this way for their esoteric knowledge in matters of law and religion, special services to the king were sometimes [212] rewarded in the same way. These exemptions were always recorded in writ- [451] ing, so that when the British arrived and began instituting their own form of universal taxation many of these documents, some claiming 990 years of [114] exemption, turned up. They were collected, translated and subsequently published by Palmer.(2)

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692 Judicial power was divided between the political leaders and the Muslim Alkalai (judges), as it is today. In the kingdom of the Mais centered at Birni Gazargamo, traditions tell of the Mainin Kanendi, literally the second to the king. This man was the chief judge of the state and, it is said, the second most important man in the realm.

In the house and the quarter of the Mainin Kanendi were twelve [693] other judges, who with himself constituted the high court of the realm. In the larger towns, the king appointed local mallams to act as judges, from

(1) Richardson, J. Mission to Central Africa; Vol. II, pp. 182ff; 1853
(2) Palmer, H.R. op. cit. pp. 12-51.

175 692 693 [645] whom appeals could be made to the high court in the capital. The keeper of the records or scribe of the high court, the Talba was considered the third most important person in the kingdom. It is said that this high court plus its scribe served as a council to the king in the affairs of state because of its members' knowledge in matters of law and religion.

175 692 643 When the Birni dynasty fell in the 19th century, Shehu Lamino served as the highest judge in the land, thus bringing political and judicial functions even more closely together in the state. He kept the idea of an appeal court and local courts but did much of the high court adjud- [631] ication himself. The relation of the temporal judiciary and its religious practitioners is illustrated by a European traveller's account in the 1820's,(1) who records that local judges' decisions could be reversed by the high court or the local political resident.

175 182 463 The presence of a large upper class and a royal court with its patterns of specialized consumption, the uneven distribution of intensive cropping and craft production localities, the contacts with North Africa and to a lesser extent the western Sudan, for the last 1000 years, have all acted as conditions supporting the differentiation of labour in [44] Bornu. This has produced the idea and the physical reality of the market.

175 439 Trade has been a well organized aspect of the society for centuries. A complex system of distribution and production through the market was observed by the first travellers in the area. Grain was dispatched to Bilma up in the desert in return for salt. This trade so tied the people of Bilma to Bornu that even today when the trade has been much reduced, they still feel themselves very closely allied to the Kanuri. Natron from Lake Chad was taken to Kano and from there traded all over coastal West Africa.

(1) Denham, D. and Clapperton, H. op. cit. p.23

3x Cohen E-4,5 (1956-1957) 1960 M514 Kanuri M514

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648 Data on how this was accomplished were not available in the public
643 records of Bornu province. Therefore it can only be assumed (provisionally, until more information becomes available) that the British promise to rebuild Kuka, the old 19th century capital, must have appealed to the Shehu, and/or the French conceded to British demands for the Shehu to be brought to Bornu. Certainly since Britain had claim to Bornu as part of Nigeria from the days of the Chartered Companies (late 19th century), and was making good the claim, it was only logical from their viewpoint that the traditional ruler of Bornu should be allowed to sit on the throne
175 in the area historically connected with his reign. Taking the evidence
648 of the French defeat of Rabeh, and their entry into Bornu with an armed force to defeat and kill his son, plus their establishment of the Shehu, it would seem as if the French from east of Lake Chad were trying to limit British expansion into Bornu by a fait accompli of possession, even though the western Chad basin had been ceded to England in the councils of European diplomacy.(1) In any event, all this manoeuvring on the part of the French proved of no avail, for it had also been decided in Europe that the Cameroons were to be administered by Germany, and the French soon had to cede even the area south of Lake Chad to that country.

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648 "The first important step by the new British overlords was
634 the sending out of the fiefholders to live in their fief-ships in 1903 ... These fiefs afterwards evolved into Districts and the most suitable men available were put in charge of them, the Shehu always being consulted
[631] in the selection. These men are now Alia or District Headmen. This formed a chain of responsibility in the administration which the size of the Emirate and its small European staff immediately demanded."(2) However

(1) Langer, W.L. The Diplomacy of Imperialism,(New York) p. 131
(2) Annual Report 1909; op. cit.

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648 not present and appoint chima gana to live in each village of the Dis-
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632 trict, who would collect taxes, levy fines, and hold judicial hearings,
661 i.e. act as Village Headmen even though incumbents for these roles had already been appointed by the British. This led to an order by the Resident of Bornu in 1910 to the effect that no District Head could station his men in any of the towns of his District with the exception of his own headquarters. However, the provincial records indicate that the chima problem plagued the administration right up until the 1930's.

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648 Besides the structural difficulties which resulted in the
651 political organization from the colonial contact, a major functional prob-
631 lem emerged in the area of taxation. By 1904 a tax collection system based on assessments made from rough estimates was instituted. Each village was assessed as a whole and the money turned into the Government (at first the Resident, later the Native Authority Treasury) through the District Head of each district. However, the Kanuri pre-British concept of taxation persisted long after British attempts to introduce their own concepts. The British attempted to introduce the idea that the District Head and the Village Heads under him were political functionaries or agents whose task it was to collect taxes, and not levy them as well.

[178] Although well known, this idea has not really ever been transferred from British culture to Kanuri ideas on tax collection and, as we shall see, what amounts to tax levies by local officials in excess of government requirements is almost a universal practice in Bornu today.

[166] The British soon found that "extortion" was being used to collect taxes. Discoveries were made by touring D.O.'s of peasants who would complain of excess taxation, or Village Heads whose prerogatives were being usurped by a chima, or in extreme cases by the emigration of peasants

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out of a very highly taxed District.(1) The net result was a high turn over in chiefs both at the District and village level, through the utilisation by the British of their powers of deposition of chiefs, and a continuation of Kanuri rather than British concepts of taxation.

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In 1914, a new Resident took over the province and began to strengthen the Emirate political structure at its center.(2) He instituted a Shehu's council with a Wazir as its head, and issued instructions that no European officer was to give direct instructions to District Heads. All directives were to be made through the Shehu and his council. This council, starting originally with two members, grew steadily in size and function. By the late 1940's it resembled a kind of local cabinet with the Wazir as its head under the titular headship of the Shehu and with each member having at least one portfolio. That is to say, the members of this Council have come more and more to function as the heads of civil service departments.

All African political organization, both traditional and introduced, was called the Native Administration by Lugard and his followers and the Emirate departments of works, forestry, education, veterinary services, etc., were dubbed the N.A. departments, for that particular Emirate. This distinguished them from the government provincial departments who administered and guided the policies and actions of all the N.A.'s in the province.

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The newly introduced European governmental services demanded some degree of western education and trained clerks from other parts of Nigeria were brought into Bornu to fill the host of small jobs which were necessary to a growing administration.

(1) In the Mobber, Geidam, Magumeri and Nganzai District Notebooks, notations have been made throughout the colonial period of complaints by peasants who reported that they had moved from one district to another because of excessive taxation.

(2) In 1914, the British swiftly and with little opposition took over the German Cameroons, half of which were ceded to them after the War.

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ite of the Shehu and was married to a daughter of the Wasiri (head of the Shehu's council). By the end of 1931 the matter began to congeal. The D. O. of Bornu Emirate wrote a note to the Resident claiming that the time had come to dispose of the District Head of Mobber since he obviously would not reform, and then suggested several names as replacements. In early 1932 the matter was mentioned briefly in a report to the Secretary of the Northern Provinces from the Resident of Bornu. It stated that "the Shehu and Council have found it necessary to depose the District Head of Mobber." Several people were nominated by the D. O. and by the Council for the replacement and the matter was closed when a man suggested by the Council was mentioned in reports as the new District Head of Mobber.

The British administrators had tried to persuade the District Head of Mobber for two years to stop using his own system of political organization and work through the Village Heads, i.e., the political structure recognized by themselves. His inability to comply finally brought about his removal. But the entire push and pull of the deposition did not materially disturb relations between the British and the political leadership of Bornu.

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Certainly the case hints at a well-organized Kanuri political system operating independently of the one formally recog-

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nized by the British. However, it also illustrates the formalized and balanced relationship which existed between the Resident and the Shehu. The Resident patiently tried to press forward with his own conception of government, while the Shehu was at the same time attempting to mollify English demands in order that the Emirate political organization could be maintained unmolested. The unsettling feature of the relations between the Kanuri and the English

Chapter VIII [p. 229]

Political Organization

631 The political organization in Bornu can be seen as a continuum of power and authority running from small to large scale structures. These include the extended household organization, the hamlet and ward, the village area, the district, and finally the state, which today has a place in the Northern Region and the Federation of Nigeria. [648] In Bornu, each expansion of the scale of the organization includes part or all of the previous one, while cross-cutting the entire system and intersecting it with varying intensities at different levels is the colonial administration.

621 The Hamlet and the Ward

Within the point of view of the present discussion the basic unit of political structure is the extended household organization [571] with its head as the primary governmental figure. The processes of fission and fusion by which these units expand or contract within themselves has already been described (see above pp. 80 - 92).

571 There is however a larger scaled process of fission and fusion which
621 integrates that previously discussed with a wider political organization. This is the underlying process of Hamlet and Ward formation. The following examples illustrate this process in action.

[361] Approximately three miles south-west of Magumeri is the
[632] small village of Gworongo (pop. circa 250) which falls within the
[249] administrative jurisdiction of the town area of Magumeri. Surrounding
[276] the town are small plots of a specialized crop (gworongo)(1) which is sold
[302] in the local markets along with tobacco flowers as a stimulant and a cosmetic for colouring women's teeth. In 1953 one of these full-time

(1) Solanacea Incanum

632 others are of more recent vintage. Dismissal from office is occasioned by (1) the political manoeuvring of the District Head who wishes to replace a Lawan with one of his own followers; (2) migration out of a Village Area or complaints by peasants to the British against their Lawan; (3) failure to raise enough tax, or attempting to raise too much. However, if a Lawan is responsive to his seniors and does not mulct his peasants to the point of hardship, migration, and complaint, he has a fairly secure position in the Bornu political organization.

The District Organization

632 In Bornu the Lawan represents a link between the higher pol-
631 itical organization and the landed peasants. To the latter he is the most easily accessible member of the ruling class, and to many, especially in the hamlets, the exact nature of the political organization above
634 the Lawan is known in only vague outline. However, in terms of the
631 Emirate, the District Head (hereafter written DH) and his administration of the District hold a central position. If there are any disturbances, irregularities in tax revenues, increases in crime, migration out of the District, or failure of any policy goals, it is to the DH that all agencies at the center turn for an explanation.

634 To the lowly peasant the DH is a man in another world, a world of awesome power, riches and courtly life. A Lawan may go abroad to oversee a new well in one of his hamlets, or to mark off the boundaries of a new farm, or take a tax census, but the DH rarely leaves his compound to go out among the people, except to collect the nomad cattle tax, or to appear at the Shehu's court for some state ceremonial.
[492] When he does venture forth, it is a royal sally, to the playing of pipe
[411] and drum, with a troop of galloping horsemen and servants brandishing swords, spears and dane guns (muzzle loaders).

634 that his assessment was too high. The DH promptly sent out some of his
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661 followers and gathered twice the assessment originally stipulated. He then called in the Lawan to the District capital, reprimanded him and gave back one-quarter of the excess tax raised by his followers.

631 Formally the Lawans are subordinate to the DH of their District. The DH relays information to them from the capital concerning the execution of their political duties and it is their responsibility to have these directives carried out. However, for various reasons to be discussed presently, some of the political activity of the DH is illegal under the present regulations. Therefore he often requires more than mere compliance to state regulations. As shown by the example above the DH wants cooperation and complicity in his own political organization of the District. Several factors militate against the absorption of the Lawans into the DH's organization. Firstly, the Lawan's salary and his income from taxes and political duties make him less dependent upon the DH than the latter's more disciplined followers. Secondly, the British have always viewed the Lawan's job as that of a local chief (see above pp.36-39) whose ties should be to the locality and not necessarily the DH. Nevertheless a DH's views are almost always taken into consideration by both the NA and the British when a new Lawan
631 is to be appointed. This last point leads to a conflict. Dismissals
661 and transfers are common occurrences among DH's. Because DH's often manage to get a few of their loyal followers into a Lawan's job, especially in the District capital, each new DH in a District is confronted with a few Lawans who are the loyal followers of his predecessor.

The result of this structural framework is a constant manoeuvring by the DH to either win the loyalty and obedience of his Lawans or replace them with his own followers.

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601 Good examples of these conflicts can be seen in some of the recorded history of Magumeri District in the last fifty years. From 1921 to 1929, Lawan Tayil, a follower of the DH, is only mentioned briefly and always alluded to as a competent Lawan. After the DH left the District in 1929 and was replaced by a new one, adverse reports by British officers (who had talked to the new DH) became more and more common. It was noted that Lawan Tayil was unpopular with the people, that there was emigration out of his village area due to exhortative taxation, and that he was disrespectful to those in authority. In 1934 he was deposed and a younger brother of the new DH was installed
631 as Lawan. Examples like this are extremely common from Magumeri's
601 recent past as well as from the other Districts. This is reflected in the length of term of Lawans in office, taken from three widely separated Districts. The average length of tenure for a Lawan who is the follower of reigning Lawan is ten years if the DH remains in the District; on the other hand, the average length of tenure for a Lawan (in the District capital) is four years after a DH has left the District.

There is a tendency indicated in the historical records
631 for DH's to appoint younger brothers as Lawans. But this has its lim-
661 its; sometimes kin are passed over, or relationships are broken because
602 a kin member feels that he will be held responsible for his kinsman's behaviour. Thus in 1935, the Lawan of Magumeri asked the British authorities if he could be moved to another District away from the hegemony of an older brother who was his DH. By 1935 the British had received a great many complaints from Magumeri District about the oppressive taxation of the DH. Thus the DH's younger brother sensing that trouble was brewing for the DH, felt that it would be more advantageous for his own political career if he were out of his older brother's District,

Brief

631 661 Another good example of this point was observed in the field. The DH of Magumeri, Digma, had obtained a Village Area Headship in Damaturu District for his younger (full) brother in 1944, while he was DH of Damaturu District. His younger brother had been extremely high-handed in the administration of his Village Area and was difficult to bring under control. The brother was finally deposed in 1949, after Digma had been sent to another District and a new DH had taken over Damaturu District. When Digma was made DH of Magumeri in 1952, he made no move to install his younger brother as a Village Area Head (Lawan). He told the writer that it was his intention not to do so in the future because his brother was a "bad man" who oppressed his villagers if he got the chance, and such misdemeanors reflected back on himself as the head of [602] the District. In the politics of Bornu, the "unity of siblings" is tempered by the requirements of office.

The N. A. Officials in the District

634 647 Local representatives of the various branches of the N. A. are stationed in the District Capital. These include (in Magumeri) a District Chief Scribe and his assistants, a veterinary mallam, a hides and skins mallam, an adult education mallam, an agricultural field assistant, the Junior Primary School Headmaster, Arabic teacher, and student teacher, between three and five N. A. Messengers, two to four N. A. policemen, a prison warder, and finally a Muslim Judge (Alkali) for the District court, and his retinue of followers. This list may be expanded or contracted from one District to another, depending upon the number of [178] civil service branches that are represented in the area. Today the tendency is towards expansion of these services and thus expansion of the personnel stationed out in the "bush." These officials are paid salaries by the N. A. and live in one ward of the District capital (away from the

634 Lawan's section), usually near the District Head's ward. They are often
647 shifted from one District to another. Only one of the N. A. employees living in Magumeri in 1956-7 had lived there for more than four years, and almost all of them had lived in at least three towns in the previous ten years. This mobility contributes to their social solidarity. Besides this common experience of mobility, they are for the most part city-bred, or at least city-trained, and form an extension of the urban bureaucracy
[571] out in the Districts. Their independent source of income from the civil service, plus their common interests in the city and the state, make them a separate class of cosmopolitans on the rural scene. Thus when asked to name their best friends, these N. A. personnel almost always refer to persons also connected with the N. A.

There is no simple formula to describe the interaction of N. A. officials in the Districts with the DH. In some cases it is similar to the DH/Lawan relationships when the Lawan is a follower of the DH's predecessor in the District. In structural terms this means that the official is not a loyal follower of the DH, but occupies some key position for which
634 the DH needs a disciplined subordinate. This occurs, for example, in the
647 office of District Chief Scribe. This official counts the tax revenues,
651 and prepares the balance sheets from the tax receipt books. Since it is important for the DH to control the amount of tax money collected, and to take some for himself to run his organization, he must be in close collaboration with the Chief Scribe.

634 In Magumeri (until August 1957) the District Chief Scribe
647 was a loyal follower of the ex-DH who had gone to another District. All
661 efforts by the present DH of Magumeri to win the support of the Chief
631 Scribe have failed. Other N. A. officials told the writer that the DH

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631 hinted at the inefficiency of the Chief Scribe to a touring British officer in 1957. After this alleged interview with the DH, the British officer stated that in his opinion there was "something going on here" and he suspected the Chief Scribe, because of a "shifty eyed look about him". In August 1957 the Chief Scribe was formally informed by the N.A. that he was being transferred to another District, with the understanding that the move was a reprimand. The DH is not free to manoeuvre someone more loyal to himself into the position of District Chief Scribe.(1)

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571 In many cases the relationship between N.A. officials in the District and the DH is one of respectful but carefully maintained social distance. The N.A. personnel are usually new to the District and generally desire to move ahead in their own civil service departments. In Magumeri, these N.A. personnel are asked to appear and eat [565] with the DH between two and four times a week. This helps validate their upper class membership as a group apart from the rural population.

(1) The total politics of this manoeuvre are more complicated than this simple outline indicates. The British officer was accompanied by a high placed N.A. official from Maiduguri in order to reprimand the DH for not collecting enough taxes. (The N.A. official later sent word by messenger from the capital apologizing for his own severity on the grounds that he could do nothing else in the presence of the British officer. He also warned the DH to increase his tax deliveries in order to avoid future trouble). For a show of efficiency, as well as to save the DH from the direct blame, it is believed by the local officials that the Chief Scribe was chosen as a scapegoat. Whether or not this is true is impossible to know; however, it is clear from his own statements that the British officer was strongly of the opinion that the Chief Scribe was in league with the DH to evict the tax revenue, and that the removal of the Scribe would slow down these efforts by the DH. The high placed N.A. official who knew better did nothing to correct this false impression held by the Englishman. And it was this false impression that led to the Chief Scribe's removal from the District. Whether or not the DH and the N.A. official planted the idea in the Englishman's head, or whether they exploited a suspicion already there, still amounts to the same thing - the removal of the Chief Scribe for a "misdemeanour" he did not commit, in order that it might be committed in the future.

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571 However, this and other moves by the DH to obtain friendship and loyalty from the N.A. employees in his area can never be totally successful in creating a unified political organization in the District. First of all, they can be moved to other Districts by their superiors and often are, thus creating the problem of new N.A. personnel constantly arriving. Secondly, their income from N.A. salaries allows them to be independent of the DH economically if they wish, while the power and authority of their own departmental superiors in the capital always acts to lessen the degree of sensitivity and possible subservience they may feel towards the DH.

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647 This does not mean to imply that the N.A. employees are completely independent of the DH. In many branches of N.A. activity it is either difficult or impossible at present to initiate or continue civil service programs without a modicum of cooperation from the DH. This is another way of saying that in the rural area the independent existence of other sources of power and authority besides the line leading from Lawan through the DH to the Shehu is hardly recognized.(1)

For example, it is impossible to establish a local forest reserve without the DH issuing orders to all Lawans ordering them to cooperate with a newly arrived District representative of the Forestry Department. Or again, it is the DH who at present enforces and maintains a regular flow of children into the Junior Primary School in his District capital. On the other hand, if the DH continually refuses to cooperate with N.A. officials and civil service programs are obstructed, complaints by local N.A. personnel, plus the failure of program goals can bring sharp reprimands down upon the DH.

The DH as a titled sub-ruler under the Shehu still has a

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(1) The exception here is the European, who the peasant knows has much power.

634 one, before he was re-stationed to the capital city by the N.A. He (1)
647 had arrived several years ago in Magumeri as the jail keeper and the
662 DH had given him a place to live within the walls of his own residence. In consequence almost all of the jailer's friendships and social relations were with people of the DH's extended household organization. This created a gap between the jailer and the other N.A. officials who felt that he was not completely trustworthy as a confidential friend, since gossip and criticism of the DH - a common topic of conversation - might be dangerous in his presence. Finally in 1955, the DH gave the jailer a young virgin of his household over whom he had marriage dispensation rights. This tied the relationship much tighter, and had the jailer stayed on in Magumeri, he would have been one of the few N.A. officials whom the DH could count on for subservient behaviour.

The D.H.'s Relations to the Center

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634 The formal and informal links of the DH to the capital are
642 extremely complex and are only treated here in summary form. (2)

Formally the DH is responsible to only one body in the political organization of Bornu, viz. the Shehu-in-Council. This body under the chairmanship of the Wazir (the Chief Councillor) decides on the policies of the State, draws up the annual budget, heads up the various departments of the N.A., acts as a court in trying cases of N.A.

[648] (1) This move was not due to machinations in the N.A. A new, young British officer was at the time zealously working on the Bornu prison system and felt that more warders were needed in Maiduguri, which soon became the accepted policy. In the colonial service of Northern Nigeria, shifts and changes of various kinds can be labelled "improvements" in Reports, and the young officer receives some merit for his conscientiousness. C.f. the picture given by Joyce Cary, in his novel Mr. Johnson, of the British officers in Northern Nigeria, each with his own peculiar "improvement" enthusiasm.

[114] (2) A separate study of these relations is being prepared in collaboration with Prof. A. G. Frank, comparing the role of the DH with that of the Russian industrial manager.

631 634 642 personnel, and ratifies all appointments, dismissals and transfers of the N.A. The DH may be informed of directives either from the Wazirí's office or from the relevant Department which would also inform their local District personnel.

648 Officially, today, the British personnel both technical and administrative, perform an advisory, not an authoritative, part in the political organization. Although much of the "advice" is given at the center, there is some contact between the colonial service officials and the District during the touring duty of the officers. Such visits are always publicized beforehand to the local officials and the British officer is always accompanied by a Shehu's Representative. Technical officers are generally concerned with their own particular program in the area and unless they feel that the local authorities are being uncooperative, they do not interfere in local or State politics. The administrative officers have a much wider range of interests which covers all areas of government not directly under the concern of some technical department, i.e. taxation, courts of law, District Councils (local government) and complaints by the peasants against their chiefs. Some also take an interest in one or more technical branch and report their findings to the relevant department after their touring duties have brought them into contact with local programs.

634 203 [631] Informally the DH has a house in the palace ward in the capital and his followers there are links between himself and the center. The Wakil (chief follower) in charge of the town house visits the Shehu regularly and represents the DH in the capital. Besides this source of contact with the center, the DH receives information from N.A. messengers, policeman and traders who travel continually from Maiduguri through the Districts. By the judicious giving of gifts to

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651 not care what the causes were for a consistent drop in tax receipts, the very fact of diminution indicated an inadequate District organization. In order to obtain the nomad cattle tax the DH must have a large group of horsed followers whom he keeps in food, clothing and all other expenses. If he does not maintain this large organization he cannot collect the taxes; if he does then he must embezzle (by British standards) tax receipts in order to do so.

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•631 Furthermore, as in any bureaucracy, standards and their
648 enforcement change through time in their emphasis, often as a result of changing personnel at the top. A new N.A. councillor became interested in school latrines, and started punishing recalcitrant DH's for not maintaining adequate toilet facilities in the District school. A British officer interested in roads was replaced by one interested in prisons and so on. These conflicts in standards and changes in emphasis bring punishments in the form of dismissals, transfers to poorer paying Districts and even jail sentences - and all this emanates from the capital. The informal links between the DH and the center help him to predict the course of policy and prepare for any changes in enforcement of the conflicting standards under which he has to operate.

The Organization at the Center

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[368] In Maiduguri at the eastern end of the royal plaza is the palace of the Shehu, the focal point of Bornu political organization.
[101] As a language and a culture Kanuri transcends its state boundaries, but within its organized bounds, the Shehu is the formal head of state. All measures, policies and appointments made by the central agencies are done in the name of the Shehu. Officially he installs office holders from the rank of Lawan up, at an investiture of "turbaning" ceremony which publicly proclaims the person's right to office. The Shehu is

645 works, etc., - are distinctly western. The Councillors work under the
647 advice of the Provincial Government Department, i.e. the Colonial gov-
[631] ernment, whose top personnel are Europeans.

647 The personnel in the N.A. departments form what has come to
571 be called a new class in the society - the new mallams. They wear wrist watches, read vernacular newspapers, listen avidly to the radio, go to political meetings, join civil service associations, and think of themselves as urban, even when they are stationed in the bush. For the most part they have obtained their jobs as a result of some exposure to western education. The separateness of this "class" from the traditional society is often claimed by British officials some of whom see in this group the foundation of a new ruling elite whose membership will be
[555] based on western education and outlook. That western education is a new means of upward mobility is undeniable, but the separateness of the new mallams in the N.A. departments from their traditional society and its values is open to doubt. This point can be illustrated by looking at some of the informal rather than formal rules of behaviour operating in the N.A.

647 Recruitment into the N.A. can be by application to the Shehu's Council or the relevant Department, in writing. No informants in
[873] the N.A. had heard of this method ever being used. Another way of recruiting personnel is to obtain the new civil servants from among the Secondary School boys of Maiduguri. Teachers in the Secondary School
[557] remark that this method is being used more often as time goes on. However, the most often utilized method of recruitment to the N.A. is a

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643 power, make the final decision if they wish. Stalemates are settled by
648 the Governor of the Northern Region. The Resident officer of Bornu was adamant in his opposition to the Kanuri's own choice for Shehu-elect in his conversations with the writer on this topic.

425 571 The high proportion of land obtained by political and religious specialists from the political leader reflects the social relations of these informants, many of whom have a close subordinate relationship to followers and supporters of the Lawan of their town.

241 [65.1] [134] [433] Operating costs for rural farm plots are governed by two factors. Firstly, there are tithes (zakat) which all farmers pay to their local political leader as a form of traditional tax. Secondly, there is soil depletion which brings decreasing results for equal effort through time. Thus even with proper planting, weeding and harvesting, the yield on a one acre plot of millet may range from eighty to four hundred pounds of threshed product, while the range for groundnuts is almost as large (one hundred and ten to three hundred and fifty pounds of decorticated 242 nuts per acre). Farm plots are generally used for three to five year 425 571 periods and then left fallow for four to six years. It should be noted that this soil depletion factor tends to activiate the political organization.(1) The farmer requiring new land generally seeks the advice of his local political leader as to whether to clear new bush land or perhaps take up some unused old plot already cleared, if such be available.(2)

423 In summary, land in Bornu can be categorized under four headings: (1) private property, which today refers primarily to house sites in large cities: these are not deeded but they can be rented or sold in a commercial transaction; (2) usufruct property, that is owned because the holder uses it, or cleared it from the bush; this also refers to

[631] (1) Increased numbers in the household operates to the same effect.
(2) In order to avoid the anomaly of a higher political authority having to ask a lower one for favours, in places like Magumeri which house a District Head, a large section of land is set aside for the use of the incumbent D.H. and his subordinates. Thus the followers of the D.H. may apply directly to him rather than the local Lawan for land use rights. N.A. employees have their choice, they may ask the D.H. or the Lawan if they wish to obtain farm plots. In all these cases it is understood that tithing is unnecessary, for none of the persons involved are "peasants of Lawan".

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Chapter X

Summary and Conclusions

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642 The description of pre-Colonial Bornu has indicated that despite the rise and fall of its fortune the Kanuri political organization has had a remarkable resiliency throughout the last millenium. As long as the system of feudal organization remained with its nucleus at the capital city and court of the monarch, then the rise and fall of the empire was not fatal to its continuity. Kanuri feudalism is a segmentary corporate political structure; while the top remains intact, the expansion and contraction of the State itself bears no relation to its survival.

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631 The traditional background from which the present society obtains its roots has been altered in this century by contact with British colonialism. In Northern Nigeria the administration was deeply affected by the views of its founder Lugard, whose own control of the organization of the regional colonial service ensured that many of its norms, procedures and its overall policy would be an embodiment of his personal philosophy of colonialism. In Bornu, this meant that the pre-Rabeh Kanuri leaders regained their old positions, the Shehu was placed at the head of the State (now called the Bornu Emirate), and the fief-holders now called District Heads or Ajias, went to live in "bush" on their respective fiefs. The Village Heads within each district were appointed because of hereditary claims to the position while the District Heads over them were chosen because of their relationship to the monarch and/or other powerful groups at the capital. This set up possible conflicts between DH's and the Village Heads in their districts
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642 which has lasted to the present day. The policy of the British was to rule through and strengthen the authority of the native leaders, while

554 828 829 within this structure. The higher the status of an individual, the more arziyi he has, and the success of any one individual either in moving from one role to another, or in performing any given role also indicates the extent of his arziyi.

631 The Kanuri political system has been described in terms of the organization of power and authority in increasingly scaled social structures starting with the extended household organization and 621 ending with a discussion of modern political parties. Any local residence group in Bornu is potentially a larger political unit either in the form of a ward within a town or as a separate hamlet in the bush. This unit resembles an extended family organization but may include non-kin as well as kin members who are all subordinate in some way to the senior male of the residence association. We have used the term [602] extended household organization to describe this flexible unit. The relation of all subordinates to the senior member is similar to that between a father and his sons and non-kin as well as kin members 621 bring their wives to this unit at the local level. If the extended 557 household organization head can maintain the subordination of his fol- [622] lowers, then he is on the way to becoming a "big" man. This can eventually lead to his attainment of the political position of Hamlet Head or Ward Head (Belama). This achieved status is then stabilized through inheritance.

621 571 At the local level, the extended household organization applies to a territorial unit of closely contiguous compounds each with its own head but with some form of subordination to the head of the larger unit. As we have seen, in other sections of the political organization and in the economic organization this kind of superior/subordinate relationship may be spread out to include men not living

621 571 in households contiguous to their superiors. The Kanuri have no name for this constant and fundamental organization in their society. However it is a major conclusion of this study that the organizational characteristics of what we have here labelled the extended household organization is the basic link between the structure of local, small scaled social interactions and the wider scaled political and economic organization of the Emirate.

631 571 The Emirate as a whole is segmentary and hierarchical structure of authority running from the Shehu-in-Council down to the lowly peasant compound. For such a system to work most efficiently there should be a pyramidal system of control from one final power through followers, to followers of followers and so on. This makes each man in the state link up hierarchically and personally to the man above him. Any conflicts between segments can be minimized and controlled if all members of the system are sensitive to the power at the top of the structure. In the language of the present discussion lower level members are (ideally) subordinates in the extended household organization of the next higher level in the political structure.

631 642 In practice there are factors present which make it impossible for the Kanuri political organization to be a simple hierarchy of authority so that each man looks to the man above him in the structure. For power and potential power in the future is segmented at the center of the State among the agnatic lineage members of the royal family and the top leaders of N.A. Thus the lower echelons of the political pyramid are lined up, not behind a unitary repository [648] of power at the center, but many. The power of the British tends even more to break up any possible unity which might occur at the top of the political organization, and tends besides to create ambiguous

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648 and conflicting standards of performance for incumbents of political roles.

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665 The results of this complexity leads to large factions each under one of the segments of power at the center of the State. Or again in the terminology adapted here - there are large extended household organisations beginning at the center of the State and incorporating in their control all DH's and Lawans (and through the Lawans, all Wards, Hamlets and compounds). Traditionally the ruler kept faction leaders close to his capital and could replace them at any time by followers, slaves or eunuchs. The ruler's subordinates made sure that the line of authority between themselves and their fief and its subjects was a loyal one. Only upon the death of a ruler was there much danger of factional disputes disrupting the political organization of the State.

[178] Today this system is in difficulty because the factional segments are not under the control of any one source of power. Because of the shifts in personnel and in personal fortunes due to conflicts with British standards, and new avenues of political success (the N.A.) at the center, the segments cross-cut one another. Thus a Lawan who is a loyal follower of a DH in district X finds himself in district Y under another DH. Or a DH finds that he has N.A. personnel from the capital in his district who are connected to political segments beyond his control.

Integrative organizational tendencies tend to offset some of the present difficulties. We have seen how DH's try to incorporate Lawans into their own organisation or, if this is not possible, the DH attempts to replace them with trustworthy followers. Informal communication channels are developed so that forecasts of changes in

631 642 665 policy or its enforcement can be predicted accurately by incumbents of political roles. However, the conflicts in the political system of Bornu have caused much labour turn-over and until a more integrated system of political goals and standards of performance is possible this turn-over will continue.

Political parties in Bornu reflect the contemporary political structure of the Emirate and its relation to the rest of the country. Because of Nigerian nationalism, Bornu is required by other Northern Nigerian Emirates to participate in national politics. Thus the powers in the society - the N.A. Council, the DH's, the judiciary, i.e. the ruling class - have joined the political party which supports the interests of others like themselves in Northern Nigeria. The reform party which is against this representation of established power is viewed not as a democratic opposition but as a threat to the moral foundations of the Kanuri State.

511 Kanuri consumption patterns indicate what materials and services the people utilize in the pursuance of their way of life and gives [433] us a basis to compare Bornu with other areas of the world. In North American terms, the Kanuri have an exceedingly low level of consumption and production. The analysis has enabled us to estimate that an average four person family in Bornu requires in the neighbourhood of $180.00 per year to maintain their cultural "norms of living".(1) As we have seen, almost all rural families grow some subsistence crops so that this figure does not represent actual cash income, but rather the value of materials

(1)This term has been defined as "the aspirations or expectations of a people, that is,the living conditions which they seek to obtain or regain, or which they regard as fitting and proper for themselves to enjoy." See Lasker, Bruno, Standards and Planes of Living, in Southern and Eastern Asia, prepared for the twelfth conference of the Institute of Pacific Relations, Kyoto, Japan, 1954 (mimeographed), p. 10.

4: Cohen E-5 (1956-1957) 1961
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turn divided into craft work, sales of surplus agricultural products, and a complex middleman trade between markets. There is a large variation in dependence upon the market as against subsistence agriculture for obtaining total income, although some farming is carried on by almost everyone except a few full-time specialists.

The society is stratified, with status based on tribal membership, occupation, birth, age, wealth, and to some extent, urban residence identifications. The people recognize two major class divisions — the upper or ruling class (*Kantuoma*) and the broad base of the peasant class (*tala*), under the autocratic hegemony of the rulers. Rosman (1959) uses eight separate categories of social status in his work on Kanuri acculturation. Cohen (1959) has used status gradients and their inter-relationships to explain social differentiation, upward mobility, and class structure.

The society has a monarch, the Shehu, in his capital city of Maiduguri, and courtly life with nobles, including *Ajia*, or District Heads, who live in their own district capitals as sub-rulers of twenty-one segments of the emirate under the Shehu. District Heads in turn have under their jurisdiction a group of contiguous Village Area units headed by *Lawan* or Village Heads. Under these latter are Hamlet Heads, *Bulama*, in charge of small settlements of contiguous compounds. Peasants call themselves the peasants of such and such a *Lawan*. Today the Native Administration departments have their personnel stationed throughout the districts. Along with the District Head and his followers they form an urban upper class living in the districts throughout the state.

The Situation

As part of a general programme of economic development in Northern Nigeria, agricultural research stations have been set up by the government in every province of the region. The results are published in annual reports so that Agricultural Officers may begin introducing new seeds, fertilizers, and even new crops on a wide scale as soon as these improvements are known to be feasible under local conditions.